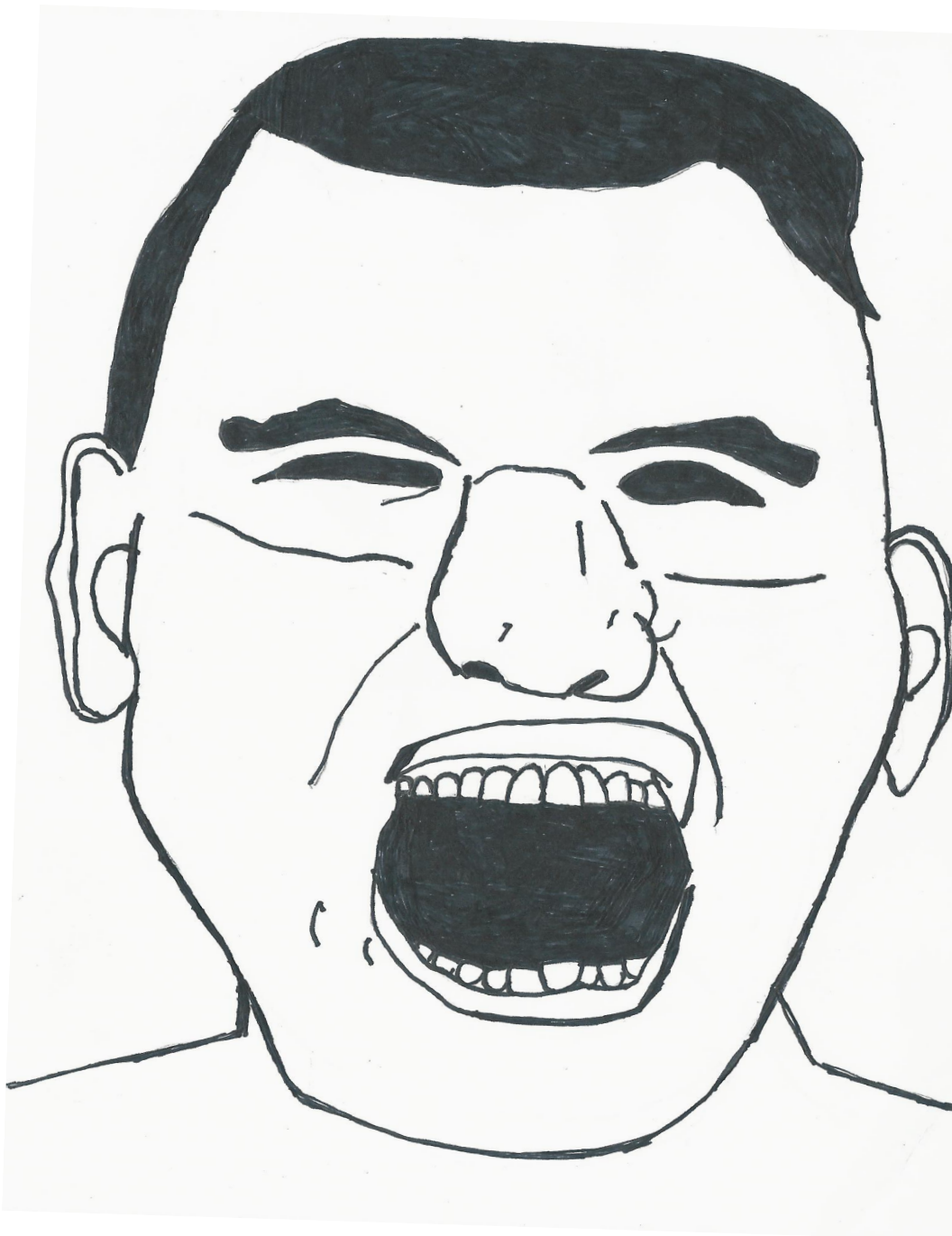




SAINT ANGER



Editorial

As long as it took me to get this thing off the ground in the first place, I'm honestly amazed that I've met my own deadline for issue two. You should all be proud of me. And me alone, because my team was on top of their stuff as usual; I was the one slacking and taking his time in putting his pieces together. I could make excuses and go on about everything I've been up to in the meantime, but I can think of a few good reasons not to. First of all, none of it is that interesting to anyone but myself, thrilled as I may be. And second, four months between issues really isn't too bad, so I still feel some measure of pride in getting this done. Plus, we already have some great content on deck for round three.

As issue one must have made clear, there's no overarching theme or format to this zine, and we don't really have a particular focus to guide us. There will be plenty of cheap horror movies, professional wrestling, and as best we can, a run-down of young adult series literature in each issue, but that's about it. What we really want to offer is something a little more unique, with takes on unfamiliar culture, and personal remembrances taking a more prominent role. This issue deals in both of those, with Research's two personal essays standing as high water marks of our particular approach to non-fiction.

Reviews aren't really part of the picture, despite the horror anthology primer included here essentially falling under that category. Research's own film essay takes a much more personal approach to the matter of engaging cinema head-on, and will hopefully set the stage for the kind of work we want to do in the future. Only by re-contextualizing and personally assessing works of familiar film art can they be approached in a truly dynamic style. And then we have MC Freeman's latest investigation into YA fantasy series. This, if nothing else, is what we will hopefully be remembered for, and I don't see anyone else out there brave enough to slog through the trenches like our man is doing.

romances. Come to think of it, maybe this movie is more like an anime than all those other things I compared it to earlier.

The chaotic timeline of Napoleon Dynamite also manifests itself in the form of the physical appearances of the characters. One thing even seasoned viewers of the movie may not realize is that Grandma and Uncle Rico are actually played by the same actor. While different actors are credited for the performances, this is just a clever mind game played by those involved with the production of the film intended to simultaneously break down the fourth wall and further suspend disbelief. Lesser examples of identity shifts in the film include class president elect Pedro Sanchez having a mental breakdown and shaving his head, Napoleon spending his last dime on a women's suit, and Uncle Rico's involvement in a breast enlargement pyramid scheme. So what does all of this mean? To put it simply, this constant dysphoria represents a four dimensional snapshot of the characters' constant lack of purpose and attempts to reinvent themselves, only to be stuck in the same desolate, mortal wasteland. The shift from Grandma to Uncle Rico is the only true and real change that takes place, suggesting that physical transcendence is the only way of fulfilling your true fantasies. At the end of the movie, when all seems to be well and the characters' sub-plots are happily resolved, Grandma returns, implying that this deeper shift in existence is the real cause of the characters' menial accomplishments.

Few films have ever transcended so many boundaries and presented existential truths so effortlessly as Napoleon Dynamite. I've watched this movie with persons of all ages, genders, races, and creeds. This joint is like the modern day Pentecost, if we're being honest. Let us proclaim the mystery of our faith brother HH. I forgot to mention too, I'm pretty sure Haley and Hillary Duff are used interchangeably throughout the movie, even though only Haley is credited.

Follow Research Anderson on Twitter @vapordoom

and *Beavis & Butthead*, existing in a non-linear void and plunging headfirst into the internalized self-loathing, regrets, and hopelessness of a rural community forgotten by the dynamics of time.

To understand this phenomenon, it's important to first marinate on the setting of *Napoleon Dynamite*. There is no clear way to determine what point in time this movie takes place in. At first glance, you'll notice the fashion and technology seems to be straight out of the 1980's. However, beneath the surface, we also see a community grappling with very modern societal issues such as immigration, self-image, and a handful of other disparities that exist in our world today. Uncle Rico is first presented to us in an endless field filming himself throwing a football outside of his orange van. When he crosses over to the plain of existence the majority of the movie takes place in, he constantly references how he would have led his high school team to a 1982 state championship victory had the coach put him in the game in its crucial final minutes. Based on this information alone, it would seem that this movie takes place around the start of the new millennium in Gregorian time. This is an early clue by the director that things are not as they seem.

When Grandma is injured, we see her in some kind of Star Wars looking sand dunes in eternal bliss donning some kind of quirky t-shirt about being divorced. In *Napoleon Dynamite*, these remote and unadulterated natural landscapes represent portals to nirvana and the lack of all human suffering. As soon as Grandma flies off her ATV and into the air, we are seamlessly presented with the shot of Uncle Rico making his football film in his personal paradise. This is no coincidence; it represents a cosmic shift where grandma takes the form of Uncle Rico on Earth. Feeling defeated and stuck in a mundane loop of nothingness after the self-proclaimed worst day of his life, *Napoleon Dynamite* subconsciously creates a tear in linear time allowing for the fluidity of the grandma/Rico spirit to make itself known and change his life forever. What ensues is something of a spiritual awakening for Napoleon as he immerses himself in the likes of quantum physics, urban expression, surrealist art, and non-traditional

This issue is bigger—and they're going to keep growing, that is a threat—with a better layout and more pictures, and a wider variety of topics to amuse you. Some people have called this toilet reading; if nothing else, this is what we aspire to provide for the world. Either way, what we have here is some fresh takes on popular favorites, a terrific confessional/self-examination of dietary habits, and my own ego-stroking take on the trashy movies I spend far too much time watching. Maybe it's interesting to nobody but ourselves; hell, that may as well be the definition of a zine in the first place. What I can say, however, is that it's all honest and sincere (especially Research's film analysis), and you haven't encountered anything like it before.

So there you go, round two off the presses. Call this our extended feature issue, because everything in here is so goddamn long. We're already gearing up for issue three, and while it was implicit before, we are always looking for submissions. Anything at all will do, as you'll see here, any content at all is fair game. If there's anything we're privileging at the moment, it's remembrances for a forthcoming series, tentatively titled "My Favorite Time I Pissed Myself." I doubt I need to explain that any further, so if you have any anecdotes that fit the bill,

send them on to

albara_v1@denison.edu. I look forward to seeing my inbox light up with those babies.



So sit back, enjoy, and help me in thanking Austrian superstar WALTER for posing for this issue's cover design (again, courtesy of Research's pen). And Research and I still haven't watched *Blue Velvet*.—Big Vin Vader

Food Mishaps

by Research Anderson* (All Kanye opinions are the author's own and were written pre-meltdown)

Y'all got me putting my good name on the line with this one. While I maintain a healthy physique these days largely with the help of probiotics and general mindfulness, it's no surprise that ya boi has some wild eating habits (just ask Big Vin Vader or MC Freeman how many times they've walked in on me eating the infamous PJ's "Fat Bitch" sandwich). My proclivity for putting my organs through death match scenarios with my wanton food choices has (rightfully) gotten me into some pretty disastrous situations. It wasn't until recounting some of my greatest food related mishaps to Big Vin Vader mere weeks ago, however, that I realized the amount of content I was sitting on. Which brings me to where I am today, a 25 year old man sitting at my desk at my full time day job writing about all the times I've stuffed myself to the point of explosive vomiting/defecation. Enjoy.

EXTREME CONTENT WARNING: The following stories contain real and graphic depictions of severe gastrointestinal malfunction and nauseating gluttony. DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME. (This essay is presented without images for your benefit.—Ed.)

Research Bombs His NBA Tryout

This one actually happened like last month. I was breaking bread with some fools out in Lakeville, Ohio and we were EATING, mane. East of Chicago pizza, chocolate cake, gummy worms, gummy orange slices, peanut M&Ms, tortilla chips, it was all in the air. It's worth noting as well that this was at like 9pm, so my digestion of this food was already heavily compromised considering I usually eat dinner by 6. But it gets much worse. Next thing I know, I'm playing 5 on 5 full court basketball and my body is going through it. I ran to the bathroom a couple of times during the game, 100% sure that I was going to throw up, but I didn't. I ended up getting 2 assists plus I had my Huaraches on, so I was feeling untouchable. Narrowly avoiding disaster on the court, I headed back inside to eat more pizza and candy. Now I'm playing

Preface

Closing us out here is what I consider to be the single most important piece of film criticism published this century. Research is out here, unsolicited and unprompted, doing the work that needs to be done. I've seen this movie nearly as many times as he has, and often in his company (hell, we may have seen it back in theaters together in the day), and he is by far the most qualified expert on the material. Tread lightly, mindfuck ahead y'all.—**BVV**

Movie Review: *Napoleon Dynamite*

by Research Anderson

Look, I've seen *Napoleon Dynamite* at least 500 times, so don't even waste your time fact checking the god on this one. If you haven't seen this avant-garde masterpiece, I don't even know how this zine made it into your crusty-ass hands. I'm going to let it slide this time, though, and impart unto you some oceanic wisdom I wish I possessed the first time I watched the film with all my childlike wonder still intact. In its experimental presentation, it's easy to see how certain plot points and seemingly minuscule events are discarded from the short term memory of the casual viewer with no second thought. It is in these moments, however, that the true nature of the film slowly reveals itself. Stick with me y'all, this one is going to get pretty wild.

Napoleon Dynamite is a cool ass nerd who lives in rural Idaho with his mysterious grandmother and playboy brother Kip. The Dynamite brothers' world is turned upside down when the matriarch of the household is hospitalized due to an ATV-related coccyx injury. Unbeknownst to them, their drifter uncle Rico is summoned to look after the boys in their grandmother's absence. While this first arc of *Napoleon Dynamite* at the surface level seems to be insignificant to the rest of the film's shenanigans, it is actually a fundamental part of understanding the film's experimental narrative. **As it turns out, Grandma and Uncle Rico are the exact same person.** *Napoleon Dynamite* is something of a cross between *Mulholland Drive*, *Gummo*,

of the kids in my class read *Harry Potter* and didn't even try to open this particular can of worms. And who could blame them? Like I said, shit is just too complicated.

Anyway, this series is at its best when it combines the surrealism of its concepts and overarching conceit with its more tried-and-true fantasy/sci-fi plots. Further complicating such a formula sends these books down a nearly incomprehensible path presumably only D.J. MacHale can follow. Dude must've been kushed out on the daily if he was writing about places called Zadaa and Quillian and Veelox and shit. Speaking of which, time for another L. Maybe I'll talk about Lemony Snicket next time. Or maybe not.



cards with some other goons, some game called Dutch Blitz. It's like a multiplayer solitaire kind of thing I guess. We're playing a couple practice rounds and my stomach is going dumb. The proverbial soda can that was the contents of my gut had been relentlessly shaken by a full speed, full contact game of basketball and this boy was about to explode. I announced in passing that I had to run to the bathroom and would be right back to start the game. This time I knew I was going to vomit without a doubt, and that's exactly what happened. We're talking like 5 or 6 full hurls, enough to fill up one of those Home Depot buckets probably. Pizza toppings still fully intact considering I had just eaten about an hour earlier. The kind of throwing up that makes your diaphragm hurt the next day. Come to think of it, this was the first time I've thrown up in quite some time. Anyway, I did what I had to do and was back within minutes playing cards with the squad. No one ever knew anything was wrong and I stayed up until like 3am eating more pizza. All in all, a great night.

Research Meets the Parents

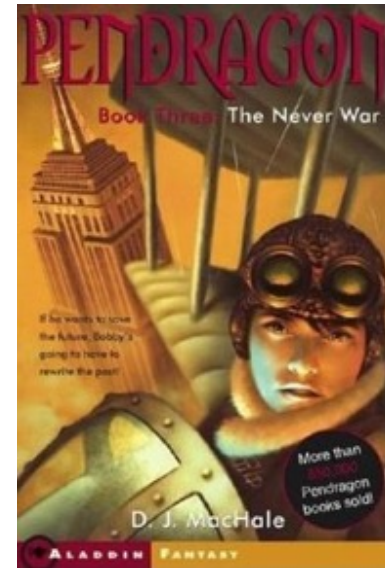
Y'all are getting some highly personal, previously unreleased anecdotes from the god with this one, let me tell you. I never even told this story to the girl I was dating at the time. Come to think of it, this one is more a product of natural forces (Mexican food) than any notably destructive dietary choices on my end. In any case, the story still ends in some unruly and ill-timed diarrhea so I found it to be a worthy addition to the anthology. I'm sure you can already fill in the blanks on how this one goes down, but as a benevolent journalist, I intend on giving you all your full money's worth (how much are we charging for this thing anyway?) (Like five bucks. —Ed.) so I'm starting from the top. This must have been in like 2013 or something. I was dating this girl with blue hair (a theme that will be explored heavily throughout this zine's lifespan) and the relationship had gotten to the point where her parents wanted to meet me. I was drinking some beers prior to the dinner and my neighbors were trying to convince me to be in their music video instead, but that's neither here nor there. We decided on hitting up the local Mexican spot for dinner. To preface, this was one of those authentic Mexican restaurants where everything is

painted bright blue/pink/yellow and all 30 combo items on the menu look the exact same on the plate. It was a pleasant lil dinner, a pretty standard meet the parents function in all ways, except one. I swear to God, I must have taken only like 4 or 5 bites of my dinner when I heard that toilet calling. Some of the most potent beans on the damn planet if you ask me. In traditional Research fashion, I excused myself with far less urgency than the situation at hand called for and casually rushed to the bathroom as quick as I possibly could without raising suspicions. Long story short, within seconds of sitting on the toilet, I was met with some of the most explosive diarrhea of my life. The pressure was like a damn Super Soaker, I couldn't believe it. Once again, did my thing, was back in about 80 seconds to enjoy the rest of my dinner with my then-girlfriend and her parents none the wiser. We ended up dating for over a year and her parents loved me. I've been back to that restaurant many times since then.

Research Suffers for the Sake of Arts & Crafts

Back in the year of our lord 2010, I was on my way to this hemp jewelry making party with some fake ass hippies. They had accepted me into their circle, despite the fact that most of our discourse involved me trying to convince them that Kanye West's *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy** was a better album than *Dark Side of the Moon* by their precious Pink Floyd. Damn, typing that out really makes realize how little regard I had for my free time back in those days. Anyway, we ended up out in Akron at this craft store to pick up more hemp (a situation I hope none of you ever find yourself in) when I realized I hadn't eaten yet. I was a freshman in college at the time, so I was living off of my meal plan with little to no disposable income. This was also a point in my life where I regularly made a habit out of replacing meals with candy (something I struggle with to this day, but have since approached with much more of a sense of moderation). This being some crusty ass generic Jo-Ann Fabrics type store, of course the candy selection was basura. I settled for a tin of some off-brand Ice Breakers sour mints to sustain me for the night. The hemp party was uneventful, but the same cannot be said for the proceedings that took place in my bathroom in the days that followed. My brangus was

who works at a hotel and is also a Traveler—only finds this out after making the plan to stop the blimp from getting shot by...uh, someone with the mob, I think? They go to Future New York (Third Earth) and check out the different scenarios and everything. (I still don't get it, but at least it's wavy.) So they end up having to work against their instincts to fight Saint Dane and let the Hindenburg blow up, making our hero feel all guilty and whatnot for letting passengers die to save the whole damn Earth. And at the very end Bobby meets this dude from the past who knew him from the thirties and thinks he's his own great-great-grandfather. Damn. That's some real shit. I fuck with that.



Final Thoughts

Wow, and I thought the *Artemis Fowl* series was trippy; this is fucked-up, fam. The best entries in this series are some of the hottest young-adult fantasy novels I read in my middle-school years. But, at its worst, this series collapses under the weight of its own lore and universe, which is really too bad. Maybe if it'd been shorter, a bit less reliant on weird vocabulary and terms to obfuscate its initially straightforward plot mechanics, and had a stronger and clearer plot arc, these books could have really caught on among young readers. Alas, Big Cig is literally the only person I know who remembers reading these books (shouts out to Big Cig tbh, he the god for that). I think back in middle school one kid even asked me "Is that *Harry Potter*?" before running away laughing. That about says it all, really. I could've been way vindicated by the arc of the story, but by the end it's so far removed from anything I can reasonably understand or explain that I'm out here looking like a fool just trying to make sense of it. Meanwhile, the rest

2. The Quillian Games (#7)

I was fully prepared to roast D.J. MacHale for ripping off the *Hunger Games* trilogy, but turns out dude had the jump on Suzanne Collins by like two years; shouts out to the rare Pyrrhic victory, I guess. Like that way more popular series, this society is run by a corrupt organization that forces people to compete in life-or-death arena gladiator shit, and there's hella political unrest and a rebellion broiling under the surface. The dudes who run the games turn out to be from Veelox, the shitty VR universe, but I guess Saint Dane took them to the new spot and then showed them other territories, which inspired ideas for the games. That's kinda cool, and also really convenient for Bobby, whose interdisciplinary universe skills are put to the ultimate test. Nevva Winter is the Traveler in this territory, so you know she ends up working for Saint Dane and fucking over the whole squad, which I genuinely did not see coming when I first read this book. Also, Saint Dane reveals his main M.O.—converging all the universes together and creating chaos—and effects start to show back on Second Earth. Mark finds a robot he apparently designed (will design? had designed?) that's related to the robots on Quillian—you know, the ol' altered-timeline gambit. They ain't pull that shit in *Catching Fire* is all I'm sayin. This book is also the only one whose title I was able to recall offhand, so you know it's icy.

1. The Never War (#3)

OK, forget all the shit I've been talking on the multiple Earths and timeline-altering and future-hopping: this one is actually sick and pretty easy to comprehend (should've been a standalone novel tbh). Bobby has to go back in time to 1937 New York (First Earth) to stop the Hindenburg from blowing up in order to change the future, because he thinks Saint Dane is planning something to do with that. But—get this—Saint Dane is playing him! If the Hindenburg is saved from being demolished, the Nazis will end up winning World War II and fucking it up for everybody. And the gang—Bobby, Spader, and this dude Gunny

malfunctioning like a damn PC modem from 1996. Take that for what you will, but please heed my warning that an entire tin of sour mints is not a sufficient or nutritionally balanced meal. Come to find out, there was actually a warning on this tin about eating too many mints resulting in some toilet issues. The moral of this story is that *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* is absolutely better than *Dark Side of the Moon*.

Research Drinks Chemicals

Chalk this one up to poor judgment. When I first moved back to Columbus back in 2015, I was working some catering gigs to get my yaper up. The event in question here was some kind of fundraiser/benefit dinner complete with emotional video packages and local testimonies. The building this function was being held at also had a cafeteria that was used during the day by employees, which shared a kitchen with the catering side of things. We served the dinner and laid low in the back for a while the main presentation was going on. Ya boi is getting thirsty at this point, and lucky for me this cafeteria is stocked with various bottled beverages and a fountain drink machine. But what catches my eye is the giant silver urn of iced tea. Without thinking about why a cafeteria that operates from 8-5 every day would have a fresh urn of tea brewed at 10pm, I pour myself a heaping glass. Upon first gulp, I realize that what I'm drinking is not tea at all, but actually the blue chemical powder that is mixed with water and left in the urns overnight to clean the stains off of the metal. One of the 3 or so instances in my life where I thought I actually might die, surprisingly no ill effects resulted from ingesting whatever potent chemical this was. The human body is wild resilient, mane.

Research Goes Raw

With the exception of the first, most recent story, this is starting to read like a chronological account of my body adapting to resist all of the crazy shit I put into it. Back in my glory days, when I was playing in a doom band, working at a Republican push-poll call center, and sleeping in until 2pm every day, we had a near-nightly tradition known as “afters”. Seemingly derived from the similar concepts such as after

parties/after hours, afters saw one lucky thrill seeker met with the privilege of hosting basically the whole damn town at their place after the bars closed until everyone eventually passed out or felt like leaving. This generally went on until about 6-9am when the miscreant townies finally made their long overdue exits. These days, I'm more partial to falling asleep at 9:30pm alone on my couch and have to believe that my positive lifestyle changes have generally restored my body to a state of somewhat normalcy. Flashback to 2014, where a particularly lavish afters saw the night's host whipping up a whole platter of frozen appetizers for an unusually small number of attendees. A welcome act of kindness considering myself and at least one other person at the function had been surviving off of \$1 Taco Bell loaded grillers at the time. Somehow, the host had finessed his way into possession of a food stamp card as a full time student, so he always came correct with the frozen food. The foodstuff in question here was a bag of frozen chicken strips, breaded and seemingly cooked on the outside. Upon de-thawing and nuking them in the oven with the rest of the frozen pre-cooked appetizers however, it became evident that these chicken strips were completely raw. When I say it became evident, what I really mean is I ate damn near a whole tender before I looked down and saw the glossy pink center of the late night snack I was so haphazardly enjoying. There's something to be said for a diet so centered around dirt cheap processed foods that you aren't able to immediately realize you're eating raw meat. After like 15 minutes of searching "salmonella" on my phone, the rest of the guests came to the conclusion that the chicken was in fact raw. We cooked it, ate it, and the world kept spinning. Again, biology goes crazy.



The Merchant of Death, this book is also on some classic fantasy tropes, but this one makes it higher on the list because of Spader. Spader shows up in later books, but is never used to quite the effect he is here. Dude swings between chill and hilarious and genuinely irrational and impulsive, which makes for a far more interesting read. I always lowkey imagined him as some Australian goon, but that was because I had the imagination of a 10-year-old. Anyway, this book series could have been about a likable dude like Spader learning to hone his reckless anger into real powers to defeat Saint Dane. I guess it sort of is, except when it came time to decide the star, MacHale went with the human freshman from Connecticut who supposedly shreds at basketball. Whatever.

3. *The Reality Bug* (#4)

This one's that real *Black Mirror*-type beat. Bobby goes to Veelox, a territory where everyone stays bodily logged in on this Matrix-type perfect life software. Bobby tests the work and gets to play an icy-ass basketball game in VR, which ironically is the only time we ever actually get to witness him going hard on the court. (I bet I could waste this kid in H-O-R-S-E, and I ain't even good like that.) Anyway, the Traveler there, this girl Aja Killian, came up with the titular Reality Bug to corrupt people's fantasies slightly and make them imperfect, ideally to make them leave the software and fix their actual world before it gets too fucked up. You already know Saint Dane's about to go in, and he messes with the Reality Bug so hard it can kill goons and transcend the software. In other words, shit gets too real. I like this one because Saint Dane dupes everybody in the territory and the Travelers get a bad outcome. Actually, I just now realized that that's apropos as hell and thematically sound; it's like the Reality Bug crossed into and infected the reader's expectations for the ending. You best believe I nudged this one up a couple slots for that.

5. *The Merchant of Death* (#1)



This is the first book, the OG. Bobby is plucked right out of his Disney Channel Original Movie sporting lifestyle and right into the heady shit. This universe is called Denduron, and it's basically on some fantasy medieval vibes. I recall liking the tone of this book a lot. Even though it's esoteric like all the others, it grounds the surreal concepts for the whole series by introducing it within a literal realm of actual fantasy, making it way easier to follow if you look at it all as some nerdy foolishness (which it is). Even though there's weird magic and the characters travel through time and space, they also deal with dungeons and mines and classic fantasy novel

stuff, so it's way more comprehensible than later entries in the series. It also helps that this book is prior to all the changing Earth timelines and the many, many territories with many, many silly-ass lexicons. As such, it's simpler, leaner, and relatively easy to pick up, even though I still sound dumb trying to explain it.

4. *The Lost City of Faar* (#2)

Bobby goes to Cloral, the chill surfer dude island universe, to meet Spader, the new Traveler from this universe, and tell him that that's now his job. Saint Dane is already on some shit when Bobby and Uncle Press get there, posing as a weird pirate captain and poisoning whole islands and shit. These kids gotta swim around and defeat the raiders (not the football team from Oakland, either), and discover this lost city on half of a map given to them by Spader's dead dad. Like

Shot-On-Video Horror Anthologies: A Primer by Big Vin Vader

Look, it should be an accepted fact by now that shot-on-video horror anthologies are among the highest forms of amateur film art. Ninety minutes is plenty of time to cram a shoddy, nonsensical narrative full of headscratching visuals and backyard/basement/bedroom surrealism; now imagine seventy given to with four or five mini-narratives and a bonus wraparound story. Whereas even an hour can be too much time to spend with some SOV trash narratives, the anthology format always keeps things fresh and refuses to let the batshit ideas overstay their welcomes. You really get the sense that there simply wasn't enough of an idea to be stretched past fifteen minutes runtime, so why not throw it all into an anthology rather than make a short film?

It's the scattershot quality of these projects that allows them to ascend the thrift shop heaps of SOV spew and claim their rightful spots at the top of the subgenre's power rankings. Amateur efforts by definition, SOV horror films lack logic, plausible narrative pacing and anything remotely resembling realistic human interactions and behavior. Taken over a seventy minute stretch, this can be exhausting, and occasionally even hallucinatory; people talk to one another but do not so much as hear, let alone listen to what is being said. Rooms of houses are repurposed to play that exact role, and every chintzy knickknack the director or their mother used to decorate the place is on embarrassing display. Possessed ventriloquist dummies morph into small children when they are required to be filmed in motion. It's enough to make you question the limits of consciousness and reality. Broken up into smaller narrative chunks, however, this sort of anti-lucidity begins to make absolute sense, and everything you are seeing becomes totally awesome. And even if a certain segment feels interminable, there are no comparisons between twenty five minutes of torture and seventy of absolute inaction.



I don't think anyone could rightly say how many SOV anthologies there really are, but what follows is a short rundown of five of the very best from the subgenre's 1985-1992 prime. These

are the most prominent, the most striking, and generally the most watchable of that entire crop. Even those who abhor SOV features can find entertainment in these collections. No two tales are the same, although they do come pretty close at any number of junctions.

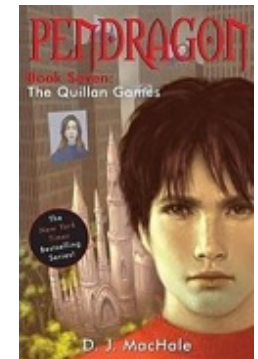
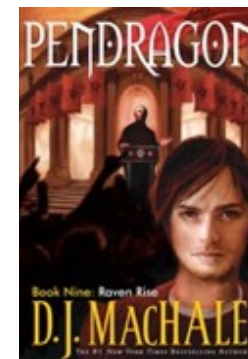
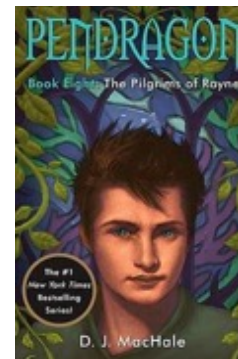
The Basement is the most polished of any of these films, largely due to it being shot on Super-8 with a real cast and crew. Since Super-8 is essentially the video of film, I don't consider this to be cheating. The wraparound story is essentially Amicus' *Tales from the Crypt* and *Vault of Horror* rehashed: ugly, poorly styled adults find themselves in a basement (natch) for no discernible reason. No explanation is ever offered for this, nor the fact that it looks like the tunnels beneath my high school. Within seconds, a door opens and a crudely made-up Crypt Keeper emerges to tell them their futures. As is standard for these films, all of these people have committed great wrongs and are to be punished in supernatural manners. The set-up is fun, but tired, so leave it to the stories themselves to provide the real glimmers of joy; they are more than up to that task.

I don't recall any titles for the segments, so we'll just proceed without them. First up, a woman lounges around a pool reading Stephen King and moving very little. As some combination of hair-and-butt rock

would be ten books, because this is the midpoint of the series and it sure doesn't feel like it. We ought to be fully invested and aware of the stakes in Bobby's quest by now, and I'm certainly not.

6. *The Pilgrims of Rayne* (#8)

Oh, good, another kinda shitty one. Bobby goes to a territory called Ibara, while Mark and Courtney do some time-traveling with Patrick, the traveler from Third Earth, to figure out where the timelines and universes started converging and undo it. Bobby finds out that Ibara is an alternate version of Veelox way in the future, created by Saint Dane's evil actions and Bobby's failure to stop him. This is actually a pretty decent twist with potentially horrifying implications, but of course there's no time spent dwelling on such things. Bobby has to stop Saint Dane by going to multiple territories and grabbing weapons and equipment to give him and the squad the edge. Of course, this simply creates more chaos, giving Saint Dane exactly what he wants. Bobby thinks he's won when he destroys the only passage out of Ibara, supposedly trapping him and Saint Dane there forever...but it doesn't work. The villain escapes through time and space (idk, they don't really explain it) and really starts fucking shit up big-time, leaving our boi Bobby trapped in a universe that is not his own. This should be a really deep, impactful moment, and I remember it being kinda that. But then again, I stopped reading after the book following this one, so, really, who cares? Damn, I need another L, stat.



mission, can't swim. (Well, maybe that last one's less obvious. It certainly is a convenient device for when MacHale feels like artificially ratcheting up the tension.) Her world of Zadaa is also exactly what you'd expect, and probably all the cringey details survived from the first draft. There's some "light-skinned" goons who live in caves, and they're taking all the water from the "dark-skinned" goons who live in the desert. This concept might work fine if MacHale handled it like any other fantasy trope situation, but instead he tiptoes around the obvious racism parallels and writes his "tribal" characters with the subtlety of an anvil falling from the sky. Someone at Simon and Schuster must've told MacHale that his worlds needed more diversity; this is, perhaps, how not to do it. The ending is about the only cool thing in the book: Saint Dane stabs Loor with a giant sword, and then Bobby stabs Saint Dane but it has no effect, and then Saint Dane dips out. Actually, that's not so cool now that I type it out.

7. Black Water (#5)

This book is highkey pretty boring, or at least it must have been; I couldn't recall a single detail about it offhand. In this universe, Eelong, there are two main groups: the Klee (cats who stand on their hind legs) and the Gar (humans they have enslaved for social status). Saint Dane wants the cats to kill all the humans, but since they want to keep the humans alive in order to keep society going, he has to resort to trickery and poisoning goons as usual. Most of the drama in this book is outside of the main story, where Mark and Courtney discover that they can use the flume to warp to Cloral and get the antidote for the poison Saint Dane is using. But since they're not technically Travelers, they fuck it up for everybody and the flumes crack under the pressure. These Earth fools end up trapping two Travelers on Eelong and breaking the way back. Bobby successfully makes it out in the nick of time, but we barely get enough time to meet this area's Traveler, Kasha, before she straight-up gets killed by a falling rock. I think D.J. MacHale phoned this one in. By this time, the plots have moved beyond worlds with classic fantasy tropes and seem more designed to confuse and befuddle. Also, I'm not sure that MacHale knew that there

blares from unseen speakers, she invites a series of men, both young and quite old over. With little persuasion, they jump into the pool and are killed by some sort of aquatic monster. A man comes over and throws her in the water. He celebrates by reading Clive Barker. Best parts: the monster resembles an extra-thick garden hose when it is shown; the woman dials her phone and says "Hey Rick, come over." A man named Steve appears at the pool.

The second segment plays more like an episode of *Tales from the Darkside*, which is a positive mark for me. A frustrated teacher daydreams about murdering his students, but they always come back as zombies to turn in their homework. He visits a cemetery and dreams that his dead bride returns as a zombie to tell him he must change his ways. On Halloween night (?) various monsters and ghouls appear and murder the man, but each one is another dream. The Grim Reaper appears at his door and the segment suddenly ends. This one is probably my favorite in the film, with the impressive mask/make-up gore effects and the high-contrast color lighting really enhancing the feel. The best part has a spectacularly ghoulish mummy appearing in his kitchen and ripping out the man's tongue, spraying blood on its own face.



In the next one, hicks dig graves before punk zombies appear—alas, it's only an independent film set. JR Bookwalter is also on the set, but there aren't many overly cringey moments of self-aware humor. Basically this is a semi-ambitious chapter about real-life zombies attacking a low-budget horror film set. There's some good gore, but it goes on way too long. The best parts are some pretty evocative establishing shots of a cemetery.

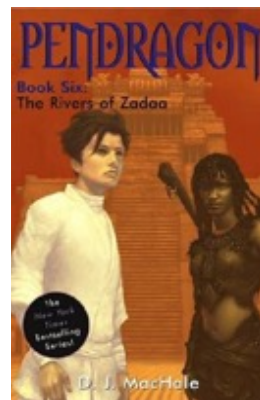
The last one also goes on too long, but has some really great moments and is fairly easy to tune in and out of. A man buys a haunted house, and proceeds to live there in seemingly total darkness. The dim lighting is pretty impressive, and the cool, hushed tones give this story the strongest overall vibe. Then the man invites a friend over, and they proceed to drink Jim Beam straight from the bottle and share stories of being abused as children. From this point, the segment really distills itself to the essence of the movie: two guys pretending to be drunk running around a badly blue-lit haunted house with a monster on the loose. The underlighting gives it a slightly psychedelic feel. Along the way, there's a great head-crushing, brain mangling scene; I mean the monster kneads the guy's brains like goddamn bread. Top five tier stuff. I forget how this all ended, but I would say badly. Then, back in the basement, the Crypt Keeper figure makes good on his promise to punish the four sinners as the film cuts to shots of lava. They scream and the movie ends.

The Super-8 polish does little to mask its rough, gritty edges, though it does sell the bad New Jersey non-acting a little better than video. The whole movie is pretty ambitious, and is handled more like a professional job than any of the others discussed here. From what I can tell, director Timothy O'Rawe wrote for *Fangoria* in the 1980s, and was also responsible for 1990's *Ghoul School*. I love the shit out of that movie's feel and aesthetics, but I have fallen asleep three times trying to finish it. I choose to interpret that in no way at all. *The Basement* lacks some of the more absurd moments of unhinged surreality that the other movies deal in, but is more coherent and

9. *Raven Rise* (#9)

First of all, what a title! This ain't an Evanescence album, y'all gotta chill. By this time Mark and Courtney have figured out how to travel between territories and they've been teaming up with Travelers to change shit around. Nevva Winter (a Traveler from a dimension in an earlier book who ends up working for Saint Dane) can now also shapeshift and do foolish shit. Bobby hops through multiple territories to try to stop the new guy who has his job now—oh yeah, he stops being a Traveler for a second because he thought destroying a portal would trap both him and Saint Dane at this island spot called Ibara, which is covered in another book. So the new Traveler is from present-day Earth (aka Second Earth), and he runs this cult that's gonna fuck up the whole timeline if they gain enough influence and cause something called "the Bronx Massacre," and someone's protesting the cult but not really 'cause it's actually Nevva in disguise. Got it? I see now why I quit the series; shit is just too complicated, fam. Plus there's no one territory to set the mood for this book, so it's a tonal hodgepodge that serves purely as narrative connective tissue to get us to (and hype for) the end of the story. No wonder I stopped reading. Anything that takes this much explaining can't be worth it.

8. *The Rivers of Zadaa* (#6)



So, uh... we should talk about Loor. Loor is a Traveler who's basically a badass Amazon warrior (or would be, if she were human and from Earth). She shows up a decent amount in the first few books, but it isn't until this book (#6) that we actually go to her home territory. Anyway, it'd certainly be nice if Loor weren't a damn cliché half the time. You can guess all her personality traits and roles pretty much from the jump: good at fighting, very few words in charmingly broken English, has the hots for Bobby but is more focused on the

Dang, what else is important? I'm still looking at the Wikipedia entries for these books and I just have no idea what other information you should know before we proceed. Uh... You gotta wear a special ring to travel. The whole universe that all the universes are in is called Halla. Saint Dane can disguise himself as anybody and wears a suit all the time in his true form, so by default he's way cooler and these books should be about him. You can't bring objects from one territory into another because that would cause chaos (guess what's gonna go down around book 6 or 7 or whatever?). Three of the "territories" are just Earth at different periods in time (the modern era, the future, and the thirties). Also, there are several other bonus novels and lore companion pieces (including prequel novels not written by MacHale), but I haven't read any of those, so I won't talk about them. Also also, people who aren't Travelers can travel, I think. Maybe? Fuck it, I don't get it either. Let's do this.

10. *The Soldiers of Halla* (#10)

This is the last book in the series, and also the one I never read. It apparently came out in May of 2009, but I was in high school then, so it was over for ya boi real quick. By default, this one's gotta go last; sorry, kids. On one hand, after all the ground I covered in the series, by rights this should be an epic conclusion that's way awesome and ties all these disparate elements together. On the other, though, if it had seemed like it was gonna be that dope, maybe I would've read the book instead of skipping it. "But wait," you ask, "doesn't that make book number nine worse, since you stopped reading the series after that one?" I might have played myself, true, and the shit might slap, who's to say? All I know is, I got maybe halfway into the plot summary of this one before I got a headache and realized it was probably better not to know what happens. That's how I know it's gotta be the worst one.

easier to follow in every other regard. This is the one to show the skeptics and get them into the good stuff.



Tales from the Quadead Zone is essentially the best SOV horror film of all time, and thus one of the finest anthology films ever as well. These are not statements of opinion. So much about this movie makes it absolutely crucial not only to the world of underground horror, but also to the wider range of obscure marginal cinema on a whole. Chester N. Turner is one of a very small handful of black directors who worked within the horror genre, and his works bear distinctive stylistic elements and a singular voice. Granted, many of these qualities seem due to sheer ineptitude as well as a tone-deaf understanding of tasteful representation, but there is no denying the man's enthusiasm and entrepreneurial spirit. His 1984 masterpiece, *Black Devil Doll from Hell* is the kind of movie you use to clear a room. It is a grimy, unflinching tour through the south side of Chicago, and the grit and grime on every video frame come not from that environment itself, but from the attitudes on display. Puppet sex and diametrically incorrect

assessments of gender roles mark it as wildly offensive and horribly dated. That all said, it is still an essential document of independent black cinema, as well as a crucial piece of the 1980s SOV horror revolution.

Tales from the Quadead Zone betters it in every way possible, not the least of which being the fact that you don't have to warn anyone before or apologize after showing it. Your guests will be no less blown away by its otherworldly existence, but will come away far less distressed. Less excessive than *BDDfH*, *Quadead* is entirely enjoyable in approaching its three stories (the wraparound counts as the most fully-fleshed out portion of the movie). A woman does her dishes, speaks to her ghostly son, and seems to shudder in ecstasy as he responds to her by blowing on her face and murmuring "sha-sha-sha-sha-sha". She reads to him from a painted over Bible that bears the film's title. After the two stories, her husband comes home and berates her for not getting over Bobby's death. He hits her, she stabs him, the cops come very quickly, and she slits her own throat in order to join Bobby in the afterlife (Quadead Zone??). There are floating teacups, seat cushions that sink under invisible asses, and an

alternately hideous and gorgeous living room in an overdone sort of garish '80s decor. There are also some surprisingly touching moments flashing



The reason you and I are so confused is because this isn't MacHale's first adventure into the fantasy unknown. He co-created several TV shows, including *Are You Afraid of the Dark?* (retrospective of an old VHS tape I have of that show to come.—Ed.), the way hyphy Nickelodeon horror anthology kids show, and *Flight 29 Down*, which I've never seen but I assume is t(w)een *Lost*. These shows, especially the former, were relatively popular in their time, though MacHale's name recognition was largely limited to the credits. But MacHale is the mad architect of the *Pendragon* universe(s), no longer beholden to television runtimes network S&P's, or conventional narrative storytelling. Over ten books, this dude went full brain melt, and all for the teens. A Google search reveals that this was a good career move: MacHale's work on the *Pendragon* series remains his most notable. Evidently, history will vindicate his fantastic visions. But what this means for the casual reader is that this shit is basically impossible to explain in a concise, cogent manner. MacHale is fathoms deep into levels of sci-fi fantasy action vibes we can only struggle to comprehend. It's so epic, it transcends even making sense.



A PENDRAGON POWER RANKING

by MC Freeman

Look, I'll be real with you: I've not read any of these books for many years, and some (well, one) I've not read at all. But Big Cig wanted my Pendragon power ranking, so here ya go, dude.

A Primer:

D.J. MacHale's *Pendragon* series is a labyrinthine, convoluted journey through multiple timelines and universes. I read nine of these damn things when I was in middle school, and what little I remember offhand is impossible to explain without taking up minutes of your time and sounding ludicrous. I can't even launch into this list myself without hitting up Wikipedia (The Free Encyclopedia) and facing this L real quick.

So there's this kid, right? Bobby Pendragon. Deadass, that's his name, so he's on some real King Arthur steelo from the outset. The first book assures us that he's the captain of his high-school basketball team; he's also 14, so the kid must be lethal in the paint. He finds out that his Uncle Press is not his real uncle, but rather some goon who can travel through time and space to other "territories" (universes) through weird gates and shit. Goons who can do this are called Travelers, and Bobby's about to learn how to become one. So, basically, instead of high school, this kid travels to all these multiverses to stop a super-powered evil Traveler named Saint Dane. Meanwhile, his best friend and girlfriend, Mark and Courtney, hang out and cover for him and finagle his real-world affairs, which isn't much trouble since after Bobby becomes a Traveler he disappears from everyone's memory except theirs. (He writes them journals from different universes, and they pick them up at dimension-hopping spots.) His journals are full, literary, evocative accounts of encounters with beings, creatures, magic and technology beyond your wildest dreams. In other words, they're really confusing and use a lot of funny-ass words (Some of these damn books are 600 pages.—Ed).

back to life before Bobby's death, which bring some depth to the proceedings and lighten the specter of real world violence.

In between this are the two stories that get read to Bobby. "Food For?" features a poor white family praying at the dinner table. Trouble is, there isn't enough food for everyone, so it's a free-for-all with the losers missing out on the tuna sandwiches. Repeat. On the third night, one of the family's large sons, clad only in overalls, gets fed up and takes a rifle to the others. Some escape, and title cards let us know that he received the "gas chair." "The Brothers" returns to the south side of Chicago, taking place in a wood-paneled funeral parlor, a guest room, and an unfinished dirt cellar. A man has three friends steal his brother's corpse. They ask very few questions about this. The man berates the sheet-clad corpse for twenty minutes, detailing his adulterous, back-stabbing ways. Then he dresses his brother in a full clown suit with make-up. Having decided that this is humiliation enough, he digs a grave in the basement, unaware that his brother has returned to life. The clown-sibling yells at his brother through a cheap, in-the-red echo box that makes him unintelligible. He stabs his brother with a pitchfork and the segment ends.



I tried to make this sound as bizarre as it plays out, but I came nowhere close. Nor did I quite capture the joy of the entire experience; there is something incredibly life-affirming in watching *Quadead*. It radiates the amateur enthusiasm of its director as well as the friends and family members he convinced to take part in his ambitious little endeavor. Nothing goes too far like *BDDfH*, but instead settles on the perfect sweet spot of inane insanity that makes the SOV subgenre so essential to fans of bizarre film. Please watch this movie.



This next movie is a marvel in every way: three absolutely killer stories all across the spectrum of generic weirdness, wood-paneled basement bars full of drunk dads, and poorly-decorated '90s living rooms on full display. Doug Ulrich's *Scary Tales* is a triptych of weird little stories that carries so much joyful, of-its-time goofiness that it's impossible not to walk away moved. Working out of Maryland, the director has a knack for capturing the bizarre corners of suburban home life, transforming these banal settings into wholly unique realms for his stories. As with every other example of the video anthology subgenre, we have a vaguely-seen storyteller spreading the evil tales to a captive audience. In this case, it's a dark-cloaked, red-eyed

- WALTER vs. Pierre Carl-Ouellet (GCW Presents Joey Janela's Spring Break 2)
- Nick Gage vs. Penta El OM (GCW Presents Joey Janela's Spring Break 2)
- Spring Break Clusterfuck 2 (GCW Presents Joey Janela's Spring Break 2)
- Joey Janela vs. The Great Sasuke (GCW Presents Joey Janela's Spring Break 2)
- Ricochet vs. EC3 vs. Killian Dane vs. Velveteen Dream vs. Adam Cole vs. Lars Sullivan (NXT TakeOver: New Orleans)
- Aleister Black vs. Andrade "Cien" Almas (NXT TakeOver: New Orleans)
- Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa (NXT TakeOver: New Orleans)
- The Miz vs. Seth Rollins vs. Finn Balor (Wrestlemania 34)
- Charlotte vs. Asuka (Wrestlemania 34)
- Triple H & Stephanie McMahon vs. Kurt Angle & Ronda Rousey (Wrestlemania 34)

Big Vin Vader's Top 10 Matches of 2018 (so far)

1. Johnny Gargano vs. Tommaso Ciampa (NXT TakeOver: NOLA)
2. WALTER vs. Timothy Thatcher (Progress 62)
3. Will Ospreay vs. Hiromu Takahashi (NJPW New Beginning Osaka)
4. Minoru Suzuki vs. Hiroshi Tanahashi (NJPW New Beginning Sapporo Day 1)
5. Golden Lovers vs. The Young Bucks (NJPW Strong Style Evolved)
6. Scurll vs. Ospreay vs. KUSHIDA vs. Takahashi (NJPW WrestleKingdom 12)
7. Ricochet vs. Chuck Taylor (PWG Mystery Vortex V)
8. Will Ospreay vs. Marty Scurll (NJPW Sakura Genesis)
9. Six-Man Ladder Match (NXT TakeOver: NOLA)
10. Aleister Black vs. Adam Cole (NXT TakeOver: Philadelphia)

Research Anderson's 30 Must Watch Matches of Wrestlemania Weekend

(This was going to be a much longer list initially, with written-out recommendations, but Research watches a lotta damn wrestling, so we realized that may be a little excessive. Here's the top-notch stuff from NOLA. —BVV).

- WALTER vs. Tom Lawlor (GCW Presents Matt Riddle's Bloodsport)
- Chris Dickinson vs. Dan Severn (GCW Presents Matt Riddle's Bloodsport)
- Nick Gage vs. Timothy Thatcher (GCW Presents Matt Riddle's Bloodsport)
- Matt Riddle vs. Minoru Suzuki (GCW Presents Matt Riddle's Bloodsport)
- AR Fox vs. Will Ospreay (Evolve 102)
- Timothy Thatcher & WALTER vs. Daisuke Sekimoto & Munenori Sawa (Evolve 102)
- Zack Sabre Jr. vs. Matt Riddle (Evolve 102)
- Team PAWG vs. Team EYFBO (Beyond Wrestling Lit Up)
- Kimber Lee vs. Tracy Williams (Beyond Wrestling Lit Up)
- Tessa Blanchard vs. Mia Yim vs. Wheeler Yuta vs. MJF (Beyond Wrestling Lit Up)
- Joey Janela & Penelope Ford vs. Orange Cassidy & Session Moth Martina (Beyond Wrestling Lit Up)
- Toni Storm vs. Timothy Thatcher (Beyond Wrestling Lit Up)
- Chris Dickinson vs. Mark Haskins (Evolve 103)
- WALTER vs. Tracy Williams (Evolve 103)
- Jaka vs. Munenori Sawa (Evolve 103)
- Matt Riddle vs. Daisuke Sekimoto (Evolve 103)
- Keith Lee vs. Daisuke Sekimoto (WWN Supershow: Mercury Rising)
- Chris Dickinson & Jaka vs. WALTER & Timothy Thatcher (WWN Supershow: Mercury Rising)
- Matt Riddle vs. Will Ospreay (WWN Supershow: Mercury Rising)
- Eli Everfly vs. KTB vs. Gringo Loco vs. Tony Deppen vs. Teddy Hart vs. DJ Z (GCW Presents Joey Janela's Spring Break 2)

figure with a gravelly voice, reading to a huddled audience from a storybook. This is all amazing, and it only gets better when the introduction to the first story concludes "But this was no ordinary necklace...it was Satan's necklace!"



In-the-red ass rock blasts from a jukebox and we see the exterior of a corner shop, which cuts immediately to a bar in someone's basement full of paunchy, balding men. This is an especially impressive dad-cave, with wall-to-wall-to-ceiling wood paneling everywhere. A man with an exemplary ponytail-beard combo makes a bad darts throw and gets compared to Stevie Wonder, so he pulls out a pair of sunglasses and mimes playing the piano while smiling. It's at about this point that you realize how great of a time you're going to have with this movie. Two of the men, Chuck and Dan (who states that he is a cop) complain and drink some, and the scene fades out. Next they around a field or park, Chuck plays around with a metal detector, and Dan, balding, mustachioed, and clad in a bomber jacket and aviators like an uncle swears about his divorce and smokes cigarettes. Chuck finds a necklace and goes home to show his wife, who is unimpressed with

the dirty trinket. His home epitomizes 1990s decor, albeit with even more exposed faux brick and wood. As his wife calls it trash, Chuck wears the necklace and immediately resembles a '70s swinger. He has nightmares of a nudity-free sex scene in which his wife vomits blood on his face; he recounts every detail matter-of-factly ("the sex part was fine"). Later, he joins her in the bathroom for sex in the tub; she fails to notice him grow horns, long black fingernails, and make a terrible pun on the word "horny." He pulls her heart out of the bathwater before Dan lets himself in the house and tries to shoot his possessed friend. He fails to kill him, the end.

Choice dialogue (all Dan):

-“I deal with more assholes than a proctologist.”

-“I haven’t seen pussy in so long, the fucking crack of dawn looks good to me.”

-[grabbing his crotch] “I got your fucking ass right here, buddy.”

Up next is “Sliced in Cold Blood,” concerning a man named John who correctly believes his wife (the actress who played Chuck’s wife sans glasses) is cheating on him. John finds a note from another man in her shirt pocket. Three minutes of through-the-windshield driving footage backed with a terrible jangle ballad follows as John trails Beth to her lover’s home. It takes him forever to actually confront them, but he murders them both while shouting random obscenities. From this



point on, we never see John above the shoulders, just his cool white pants, black trench coat and bloody machete. He kills a bunch of people, and the make-up effects are reasonably gory and pretty impressive. The best of these,

Neither SOV horror movies, or even horror anthologies are for everyone, and I feel like most people would hate all of these from the start. Amateur horror isn’t something you can just jump right into, and its absolute lack of nuances takes some getting used to, casting the style as a sort of opposite to art films. The acting is uniformly terrible, and the sets are pretty much back yards and living rooms, which are enough to turn most prospective viewers off. Looking past these things, and with enough exposure that they become accepted quirks, the real joys emerge. Teenagers and grown men with more passion than money or actual talent pushing forward to finish and release their own horror movies is one of the most encouraging things in the world. What the hell have any of us really done with our free time and the resources around us?

Better than that, however, are the simple joys of the projects themselves. Some of the things I wrote about here are absolutely absurd, and every one of them actually happens. That’s cinematic magic if I’ve ever heard of it. Also, things just seemed to degenerate as the years went on, with the insanity level stepping up as time went on. This is why a movie like *Scary Tales* is not disjointed and frustratingly shambolic, but amazing and slightly hallucinatory in its hodge-podge style. In the most full-of-my-own-shit manner possible, I’m willing to stake the claim that watching the best of these movies can produce a full-on psychedelic experience, albeit one borne out of cheap rubber costumes, a lack of internal human logic, and mundanity. The anthology format does the SOV style one better, so that everything breezes past you, failing to give you any sort of concrete resolution because the creators were too inexperienced to understand satisfying conclusions. Clichés may abound in narrative structures, and there is not a single rounded character in this whole bunch, but the moments of horror and stilted dialogue are just absurd enough to provide more sheer joy than you may have thought possible.

"A Day in the Park" follows a young couple having a picnic in an oddly empty park. They begin arguing for no reason, but only after the boy takes some dishes to the trash can and finds a revolver. They run around for a few minutes until he shoots her. He then gets in a car and blares "Baby Got Back" as he drives off.

Finally, "R.I.P. Rest in Peace" wins the award for most redundant title. A man in a bad wig chops wood on a suburban sidewalk for no discernible reason. A snoring punk/dominatrix tries to sleep unsuccessfully and goes out to confront him. After a homophobic exchange, she disembowels him and cuts his head off. The movie ends with protestors boycotting Scarlet Fry and holding "Make Love Not Gore" signs.

Nothing in this featurette can be intellectualized, and it really shouldn't be attempted. Even the parts that would normally be offensive in a feature-length film are just so underdeveloped that they fade from memory. Conversely, maybe that flippancy makes it even worse. Regardless, this is sheer stupidity informed by love for the genre, and it emerged right at a point where backyard productions along these



lines stopped gaining video store prominence and a whole new wave of shit-fi digital video crap took over the genre. The acting is bad, but the grainy grit of the video image gives it an endearing substance that makes it far more watchable than it should be.

and the most crucial moment in the movie is the murder of a fat man listening to a Walkman while belching and drinking beer. His stomach is exposed. John crushes his head until his eyeballs pop out through his fingers. The scene ends with a long, slow zoom into the man's belly button, which is the greatest thing most people will ever see. The short ends when John decapitates a man at a payphone and the camera tilts up and does a shaky zoom onto his face. I have no clue why his head was never shown during his murder spree; it can't be for suspense since his wife identified him before he killed her.

Choice dialogue:

-Bob: "So what's the agenda?"

-Beth: "Well, you could fuck me, or I could fuck you, or we could fuck each other."

Up last is "Level 21", the most imaginative of all the segments. Re-appearing here are Dan, in a toupee and with a nerdy accent, and Bob now playing our video game-obsessed adult protagonist. He's so dedicated to making it to the titular level that he regularly disappoints his wife and son, bringing the movie's focus once again to oddly-specific domestic issues. Also, the house this one was shot in has so much wood paneling that it looks like a black backdrop. He finally beats level 20 while wearing a Ren & Stimpy tank top, and wakes up in a field dressed in a cape, breastplate armor, red culottes, and velcro strap sandals. The fat man from the last segment appears, crouched on his knees to play a dwarf. From here on out it's fifteen minutes of grown men living out Medieval Times-lite cosplay: a ninja (??) gets slapped in the crotch twice, a large, mostly-nude man in a loose bald cap plays an ogre, and the Dark Overlord appears wearing dark lipstick and nail polish, as well as a painted-on widow's peak. He throws fire at the gamer, and a bush catches for several seconds, but he is ultimately decapitated, allowing the man to return to the real world. Just kidding, the Dark Overlord, head-in-hands, appears at his front door as the movie ends.

Choice dialogue:

-“I’m not paying you two clowns to beat off to girly magazines all day.”

What a fucking blast that was: seventy minutes of sheer creative glee. All of the weirdness this movie generates allows it to occupy a gray-area among other SOV trash. The recurring actors and less-than

twenty person cast make it feel homemade like *Quadead*, but the gore effects are actually pretty professional. And as bonkers as things get, there’s none of the disturbing insularity of something like Turner’s work.



Also, even though the visual components and lack of narrative logic seem to deny the possibility of an adult creating this, the strange focus on all sorts of domestic issues contradicts this. Ulrich gives us a view of Baltimore that doesn’t read like a teenager hanging out at their favorite places and deciding to film them, and the entire cast is adult. Then again, the characters say “fuck” so often that you can’t help but think of grinning sixteen year-olds trying to get away with something. I’m sure I’m thinking too much, and rambling, so the point is: watch this.

There is no purer horror film experience than watching any of the Super 8/VHS-lensed works of Pennsylvania twin auteurs John and Mark Polonia. Understandably, their best and most crucial work is their earliest, everything shot during their teenage years up to and including 1987’s notorious *Splatter Farm*. Due to their nonstop adolescent moviemaking, a handful of these teenage gems were

and eats it. Why he was able to take this much action to satiate himself but not put extra items in his lunch box is beside the point. Guess the title pun yourself.

In “Salt with That Dear,” a man stirs baked beans while his wife sits in the other room, berating him for taking too long. Among other things, she calls him: fruitcake, fucked-up old prick, shit-smelling fuckwad, low-life motherfucking pee head (?) puke, scum-slinging fucks-in-the-wind, ball-sucking prick. The food isn’t salty enough, so she knees him in the balls, which provokes him to beat her over the head with a handily-available table leg. The actress continues to blink for several seconds after her character dies.

“Kiss Me Kiss Me New Wave Zombie” is the best of the bunch, and easily wins the title game. A woman mourns someone in a cemetery as a zombie rises from a grave for no reason. His make-up is pretty good, as is his spotless, button-laden blazer and skinny tie ensemble; this denotes him as new wave. The zombie attacks the woman, and simulates eating her by rubbing cow guts on his mask.



Wraparound and second segment aside, this is pretty goddamn great, and a good use of anyone's seventy minutes (that magical SOV runtime). Even this early in their careers, and given the rough-cut nature of the source materials, the brothers show some real promise through their able camera work, impressive lighting and staging. The Polonias were more capable than most SOV hacks, even as teenagers, and the fact that this stuff still exists is nothing short of a blessing. It's fun, inoffensive, and delirious, even if it's hardly a good entry point to the Polonias' filmography or the SOV anthology subgenre itself.

While none of the other movies discussed here could truly qualify for the distance run, *Scarlet Fry's Horrorama* is the obvious winner in the SOV anthology sprint category. Clocking in with six shorts and a brief wraparound at just over thirty minutes, this bare bones approach is the ultimate end-all of the style. The stories are so underdeveloped and filled with E.C. Comics-styled ironic comeuppances that they function more as punchlines, quick bursts of energy that are too brief to grate. The tone is more overtly comical as well, thanks to director Walter Reuther's turn as the titular horror host, who comes off far closer to the Crypt Keeper's original model than any of the other storytellers. After introducing himself, kissing a skeleton on the lips for several seconds, and cackling, we jump right into the vignettes.

"In the Sack" blares into focus with overexposed California visuals and goofy, kitschy lounge music. A new wave blonde prepares for her blind date, vocalizing her hopes for a hot guy as she put on her make up. He shows up early, wearing a leather jacket, shades, a ponytail, and white goddamn pants, and of course his name is Josh. He turns out to be a creep, so she cuts off his dick (a hot dog) and puts it in a Ziploc bag with others.

The picture is noticeably worse on "Manwich," but that hardly matters. Two lumberjacks eat lunch under some trees; one is content, the other, larger man is not and swears and insults his wife for not packing enough food. Otherwise unprovoked, he saws off his coworker's leg



bound to be lost to time. Thanks to Sub Rosa, a number of missing Polonia titles have seen their first legitimate releases, with one of the best being the brothers'

stab at the horror anthology: *Channel 13*.

The Polonia boys look to be all of sixteen at the time they shot *Channel 13*, and sixteen-year-olds aren't known for sticking with things. They are known for bitching Eurotrash 'staches and a healthy obsession with watery gore. The brothers' nonstop filming gave them an early mastery over the VHS format and helped develop their unique anti-style of filmmaking. There was no existing wraparound segment, and the reconstructed version is the weakest of any anthology discussed here. A cheesy, faux-'80s dork catches up on games at the arcade, then heads home to watch some TV. His living room is full of Pacman plushes, retro posters, and a seven-inch single display rack; none of this is very cool. His TV is stuck on the titular station, and a rubber-masked creep in a black cloak mumbles some introductions as the anthology begins to play out.

"All Hallow's Eve" is up first, and it may be the best non-*SplatterFarm/Hallucinations* work the boys ever produced. From the opening shots there's a nice mood on display, with orange-lit autumn scenes and an echoing narration track introducing a supernatural scarecrow. Everything is bathed in harsh orange and blue light, and piles of dead leaves spill out of every corner, giving a desolate, seasonal vibe to the

whole segment. That said, this is still a movie made by teenagers, so there's all sorts of nonsensical awesomeness like a blood and offal-filled pumpkin getting carved before eating one brother's hand. Also, after the scarecrow comes to life, he announces to his maker "let's go kick some ass." The brother responds "right on." This is exactly what you come to this sort of movie for.

Early Polonia movies feature two things: one simple-minded brother being bullied by his more popular, well-adjusted twin, and extensive use of their parents' home in all its middle-class, tacky-design splendor. There is also a total lack of adults, and a shitload of cigarettes to be smoked. The only set beyond the family home and property is a sequence shot in a grocery store, likely the boys' place of employment. This gives the short some added production value, while the gory stabbing they stage during what look to be business hours cements this one in the realm of SOV insanity. Meanwhile, the normal brother is having a Halloween party that we never see, though some loud, awesome synth funk is heard. What we do see, however, is someone dressed as Michael Myers, played by a teenager who may or may not have ever been drunk, stumble down to the basement to lift some weights. The scarecrow punches through his head and takes his booze. Later, the asshole brother wanders the basement for five full minutes dressed as a mad scientist before taking an axe to the head. Upstairs, two other boys hide, despite the fact that neither dead teen screamed. One of them gets stabbed in the shower; he is wearing a shirt that disappears when he is shown in close-up. The other boy fights with the simple brother, melts his face on a stove burner, and flees. It becomes morning instantly and the scarecrow has returned to its perch. The end.

The movie is more than half over now, and this is not a bad thing at all. Second segment "Claws of Terror" is in a similar mold to the wraparound, having been shot in 2016 since the original footage simply didn't exist. It isn't very good, and the movie could do without it if not for the fact that two segments do not make a full anthology. A man walks down a snowy road clutching a paper bag full of seeds.

This catches the attention of a shitty-looking bird/skeleton puppet, which chases him. It takes the bag and empties it on the snow, the man gives it the finger and walks off. The bird-thing attacks him.

"Slaughterhouse" brings things to a close and takes us back to the glorious '80s camcorder style the brothers are known for. A man named Hank and his "boy"—a hooded killer—dismember corpses to make sauce at "Hank's Sauce Farm." The brother playing Hank is dressed in stuffed coveralls and is unshaven with greasy make-up smeared on his face. We get to see a whole shelf of various rubber gore gags that recur in most Polonia movies: a charred baby doll, skin masks, Styrofoam severed heads, and a doll head in a jar of water. Some Super 8 footage of a car driving through the woods follows. Two teens, played by the other twin and one of their mulleted friends stay at Hank's (the Polonia family home) and slowly realize that things are wrong. But not before eating some human meat sauce. There is an elaborate machine for processing the meat, and a focus on the child-like simplicity of the hooded killer. The two boys try to escape Rapunzel-style but are killed offscreen. As you may expect, the wraparound closes with the '80s dork getting trapped in his TV, stuck



on
Channel
13 forever.